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AUTHOR Evans, Dina
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ABSTRACT

The cultural diversity of Japan can provide a rewarding learning experience for children of all grade levels. This teaching unit includes resources and ideas for the study of Japanese society, art, folklore, and poetry. Included among the instructional objectives are: (1) children will compare U.S. lifestyles with Japanese lifestyles by reading various books; (2) children will put the information they have acquired to use by making replicas or simulations; (3) children will produce origami figures in order to develop a greater understanding of this Japanese art form; (4) children will recognize the difference between reality and fantasy after reading and discussing Japanese folktales; and (5) children will develop an appreciation for Japanese poetry by writing their own haiku. A bibliography is included. (BZ)

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TEACHING UNIT: JAPAN

DINA EVANS

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INTRODUCTION

This unit was designed to give children an awareness of cultural diversity. I chose the culture of Japan to form this unit. Any culture may be used or several cultures could be used in conjunction with each other. I have a lot of general ideas which can be developed into a lesson or activity that fits each particular classroom or group of students.

These ideas can also be developed for younger or older children. Younger children would probably do more discussion, dictating, drawing and drama activities. Older children can also do these things as well as writing reports, doing their own research (individually or in groups), making models or maps and giving speeches. If possible, all children would enjoy a trip to a museum that has exhibits of cultures that are being studied. Another idea would be to have some one from the country come into the classroom to talk about their own experiences. If a speaker isn't available, filmstrips, movies or slides are good substitutes.

When searching through several libraries for information I became disappointed. I didn't find as many books as I had hoped to. I didn't find many folktales or books that focused on art, dress, musical instruments, homes or geography. One things I really wanted to find was a record or tape with Japanese music or at least a book with words to various songs. The books I did find are encyclopedias that deal with the country in general. They don't go into much detail like on the tea ceremony or their traditional dress.

This unit is meant to give ideas to teachers on how to use various books in the classroom. Although I chose Japan, any country can be used in its place.

JAPANESE SOCIETY

RESOURCES:

Darbois, Dominique. Noriko: Girl of Japan.

Schoat, G. Warren. Junichi: A Boy of Japan.

Jacobsen, Peter Otto and Preben Sejer Kristensen. A Family In Japan.

Gidal, Sonia and Tim. My Village In Japan.

Kawamata, Kazuhide. We Live In Japan.

These books are all good for discussions and lessons dealing with the Japanese Society and culture. Some of the books are old and others are recent. Some of these books go through a day in the life of and individual and others discuss society in general. Each book can be used individually or in conjunction with others .

IDEAS:

1. Use the books Junichi: A Boy of Japan and Noriko: Girl of Japan. in conjuction with each other. Both were written in 1964. One book is about a day in the life of a boy and the other is about a day in the life of a girl. These books could be compared for similarities or differences in their lifestyles, villages, or gender roles. Another book can also be used with these two books. My Village In Japan was written in 1966 and is about the life of a young boy and his village. In comparing the this book with the other two, discussion could center around whether there were major changes over two years or whether things were relatively the same. Also, what did the books focus on and was anything left out that a reader might want to know about?

OBJECTIVE: Children will recognize and discuss a differences and simlarities in literature in relation to society and culture of a given country.

2. A Family In Japan and We Live In Japan are both books about Japanese life written in the past two years. A Family In Japan is about a family that lives and works in a Japanese city. We Live In Japan is a book that discusses various occupations of Japan with the people who work at these jobs. These books can be compared with each other for similarities and differences. This can also be extended to the other books. Children can compare the books for changes which have occurred in the past twenty years. Is anything the same or have there been a lot of changes?

   OBJECTIVE: Children will find differences and similarities in the culture of Japan by reading various books.

3. These books can also be used with younger students by focusing on the photographs. The teacher can also supplement the pictures with excerpts from the book.

4. These books can also be used to compare Japanese lifestyles. The book We Live In Japan is good for this activity. Some of the occupations it discusses can be found in the United States, like automobile worker and others are not common to the U.S., like a kimono dealer. Children could also think of an occupation in the U.S. that's almost like those in Japan.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will compare American lifestyles with Japanese lifestyles by reading various books.

INFORMATION BOOKS

RESOURCES:

Constable, George. Library Of Nations: Japan.

Davidson, Judith. Japan: Where East Meets West.

Green, Carol. Enchantment Of The World: Japan.

These books are full of information on almost every aspect of Japan. By looking through these books, children could find just about anything they wanted to know about Japan and Japanese culture.

IDEAS:

1. A class could be divided into groups. Each group would have a diffrent topic to research. Some topics could be geography, industry, agriculture, art, and ceremonies. Then each group could give a presentation or write a paper about their topic.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will work cooperatively to prepare a topic on some aspect of Japanese lifestyles. Children will also learn to locate specific material from information books.

2. Children could take given information from these books and simulate them in the classroom. For example, children could simulate a traditional Japanese ceremony or they could make a replica of a Japanese temple. They may also choose to make a detailed map of Japan.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will use the information that they have acquired and put it to use by making replicas or simulations.

3. The picture in these can easily be used with younger children. They can learn about Japan by paging through information books. Given a photograph of Japan, a young child could describe the picture. After the teacher has discussed various aspects of Japan.

OBJECTIVES: Children will describe pictures after the teacher has discussed various aspects of Japan with the class.

ART

RESOURCES:

Konishi, Kiyoko. Japanese Cooking For Health And Fitness.

Araki, Chiyo. Origami In The Classroom.

Temko, Florence. Paper Folding-Cut-Sculpted.

Origami is the Japanese art of paper folding. It is an ancient activity that ranges in difficulty. All that is needed is paper and sometimes scissors. The paper is usually square and can be just about any size. younger children will probably need large pieces while older children can try some designs with small pieces.

IDEAS:

1. Make origami figures. Easy patterns with fewer folds may be used for younger children (i.e. hat). More difficult figures can be made by older students. Children may also extend this activity by designing and naming their own figures.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will produce arigami figues in oder to develop a greater understanding of this Japanese art form.

2. Children compare and evaluate the directions in various origami books. Some questions a teacher might ask the children to evaluate the book on criteria such as:

   - Did they have all the nesessary information to make the figure?
   - Were the directions accompanied by pictures of eachstep?
   - Was there a picture of the finished design?
   - As a reader of this book was there anything else you want to know about origami?
   - Were the directions easy to follow?

. Did your finished design look like the one in the book?

Children can be grouped and each group can evaluate a different or the same book. Later children can discuss what they came up with and why they made a certain choice.

OBJECTIVE: Children will analyze and evaluate origami books an the quality of the written directions.

3. Children could tell each other how to make an origami design. One child tell how he or she made a design without showing the process. Children could also read directions from a book aloud without showing the others pictures.

OBJECTIVE: Children will recognize the importance of pictures or visual aids when making an origami design. Children will also discover that telling someone how to do something is more difficult then showing them the process.

4. Japanese food is is very colorful and decorative. As an art activity, children could analyze pictures of Japanese dishes and make paper mache replicas of some of them. If possible it would be fun to have a sushi bar, but the food may be too expensive.

OBJECTIVE: Children will create replicas of Japanese food out of paper mache and recognize the diverse ways in which food can be perpared.

PICTURE BOOKS

RESOURCES:

Dines, Glen. A Tiger In The Cherry Tree.

Ness, Evaline. A Double Discovery.

Yashima, Mitsu and Taro. Plenty To Watch.

Yashima, Taro. Crow Boy.

Yashima, Taro. The Village Tree.

These are all picture books that are especially good for younger chidren. The books, A Double Discovery and A Tiger In The Cherry Tree are both folk tales of Japan. The other three books deal with life in a Japanese village.

IDEAS:

1. A Double Discovery and A Tiger In The Cherry Tree are good books to use with young children when discussing reality versus fantasy. Children could be asked if this story could really happen and how would the story change if it was told by a different character.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will recognize the difference between reality and fantasy after reading and discussing Japanese folktales.

2. Plenty To Watch is about two children and what they see on their walk home from school. Children could be read the story and then they could recall the different things that were in the story. The occupations in the story could be compared to occupations found in in the United States or in their own community. Crow Boy is about a country boy who walks to school each day. He is more in tune with nature than the children in the village. The children in the village didn't understand him and didn't attempt to be his friends. Some children in the class may understand these feelings. Also this book

gives an idea of what a village school is like in Japan. The Village Tree is about boys and how they spend their time in a Japanese village. Children could discuss if they play the same games that are in the book. All these books are good for discussing the similarities and differences between life in Japan and life in the United States. Children could also write stories using the same topics as these books, but instead of writing about life in Japan, they could write about life in their community.

OBJECTIVE: Children will discuss how stories can give inforamation about children's lives in Japan.

FOLKLORE

RESOURCES:

Dolch, Edward W. and Marguerite P. Stories From Japan.

Carpenter, Frances. People From The Sky.

These books are full of various folktales from Japan. Folktales often have people bestowed with magical powers, giants and fantasy creatures. Sometimes these tales try to teach a lesson or they have a moral.

IDEAS:

1. After reading any of the tales many questions could be asked. Some questions could be:
   a.) Could this happen in real life?
   b.) Is this tale similar to any other story you might have heard?
   c.) How would the story change it it was told by a different character in the story?
   d.) Give the story a different ending.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will recognize the difference between folklore and reality by reading various folktales and discussing the atbutes which make them folktales.

2. Some folktales can be acted out or produced as a puppet show. Children can either be actors, do scenery, write lines or make programs.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will discover that ideas, such as stories or folktales, can be acted out in a cooperative effort.

3. Children can read various folktales or be told various folktales orally. Children can then write or tell their own folktale. Pictures can also be drawn to go along with their story. They may choose to use characters from Japanese tales.

OBJECTIVE: Children will write or tell their own folktales that may, or may not involve Jananese characters.

POETRY

RESOURCES:

Behn, Harry. Cricket Songs.

Lewis, Richard. There are Two Lives: Poems by Children of Japan.

Lewis, Richard. The Way of Silence: The Prose and Poetry of Basho.

Lewis, Richard. Of This World: A Poet's Life in Poetry.

Issa, Yayu, Kikaku. Don't Tell the Scarecrow and other Japanese Poems.

Haiku is a form of poetry developed by the Japanese. It is not the only form but it is the most common. The form is simple and can be learned by even young children.

IDEAS:

1. Children can be taught how to write haiku. They can first read many haiku poems and then discuss what makes them haiku. Children can accompany their haiku with pictures.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will develop an appreciation for the art of haiku by writing their own haiku.

2. The book, There Are Two Lives, is full of poems written by six to eleven year olds. It's divided into six sections: family, play, school, creatures, nature, thoughts. Children can read these poems to see if Japanese children have the same ideas about various topics as American children do. They may also notice that in this book, the poems are not haiku. Children could write poems using the same topics as those in the book.

   OBJECTIVE: Children will learn to recognize the difference between haiku and other poetry and they will learn that children can and do write poetry.

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